

# Hillandale

## News

No 214 February 1997



# MECHANICAL MUSIC

Tuesday 25th March 1997



*A G&T. Oak Gramophone pedestal sold recently at auction for £2500.*

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# Hillandale News

The Official Journal of The City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society Limited, Co. Reg. No. 3124250

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The Society was founded in 1919

**Patrons:** Oliver Berliner and Kathleen Darby



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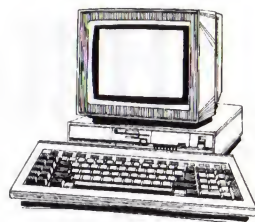
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**Front cover illustration:** Apollo Gramophone Record  
(See Frank Andrews' article beginning on page 203)



## EDITOR'S DESK



### Changes

Eagle-eyed readers will have noticed some changes on our title page. The editorial office now has fax facilities and is now on the internet. Our e-mail address is clpgs@aol.com. Those who have articles to contribute to the magazine can now send them by e-mail. This facility is open to anyone who wishes to contact us. It is hoped that we will have a site on the World Wide Web before the year's end. We will let you know when the site has been established.

### Deaths

We regret to announce the death of our oldest honorary member Cavan O'Connor on January 11th 1997. Many of our readers will have some of his recordings in their collections. Ernie Baylay has informed us that one of our Australian members Allen Goodwin has died. Our sympathy is extended to the families of both. Tributes to both will be paid in our next issue.

### London Meetings

The **February** Meeting will feature Peter Copeland, of the National Sound Archive, who will give the second part of his talk *The Engineer and the Artist*. In the first part of this talk in November Peter gave us a lot of inside information about the recording engineer's work. I am sure the second part will be equally interesting and rewarding and can recommend this evening to our readers. In the **March** meeting your Editor will be giving a programme *A Taste of Scotland*. This evening will obviously have a Scottish bias but should have something of interest to all. Do come and support us at both these meetings.

Please note that material intended for inclusion in *Hillandale News* must reach the Editor not later than **six weeks before the first day of the month of issue**.

Hence the deadline for the **April 1997** issue will be **15th February 1996**.

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Views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor.

# WE ALSO HAVE OUR OWN RECORDS

## Part 2

by Frank Andrews

### A.F.W.K. (and what?)

The sole evidence I have for the existence of a record label named A.F.W.K. (or for the first part of its style) was from the pages of Sir John Hall's publication, called *Antique Record* (October 1974, p19), in which a discography of the recorded music of Joseph Holbrooke mentions an A.F.W.K. disc, bearing a D prefixed catalogue number. The disc was associated with or issued by the Oxford University Press and was probably of two sides which had previously issued by the Anglo-French Music Company as pressed by the Parlophone Company in 1924. I have no idea what A.F.W.K. stands for. I could suggest Anglo-French Welt Katalog but I'm probably way off beam!

### Aircraft Products Ltd. Souvenir Record Book

The above company was founded in June 1934 and established on a business already trading from 89 New Oxford Street, London W.C. managed by a Mrs Sadie Cohen. The newly organised firm primarily carried on a mail order business dealing in novelties.

As far as I am aware the **Souvenir Record Book** containing six single-side 5" records was the only occasion the company had records on offer although the Book (album) did ask purchasers to watch out for new monthly releases. No collector has yet found evidence that subsequent issues ever went on sale.

The recordings all by recognised front rank Music Hall artists were unique to the Souvenir album. They were unbreakable, made under the Dubrico patent 33796, and being

close-grooved it was claimed that they played as long as standard 10" records. They played at 78rpm. The discs came to Aircraft Products Ltd. through Sound Distributors Ltd. The discs were made of a similar composition, on a stiff card backing, as the defunct single-sided 10" Durium Records. This type of record first saw light in the U.S.A. as *Hit-Of-The-Week* disc's.

The Sound Distributors numbers on the discs ranged between SD137 and SD 154, but it must not be assumed that the dozen numbers not used in the Souvenir Book's recordings were also of Music Hall artists. The other numbers were probably employed for other Sound Distributor's clients.

I have not yet found out when the Souvenir Book first became available or for how long it remained on sale. Aircraft Products Ltd. went out of business in April 1939.

{Florrie Forde on SD144 singing *It Pays to Advertise* was played. Not a plug!}

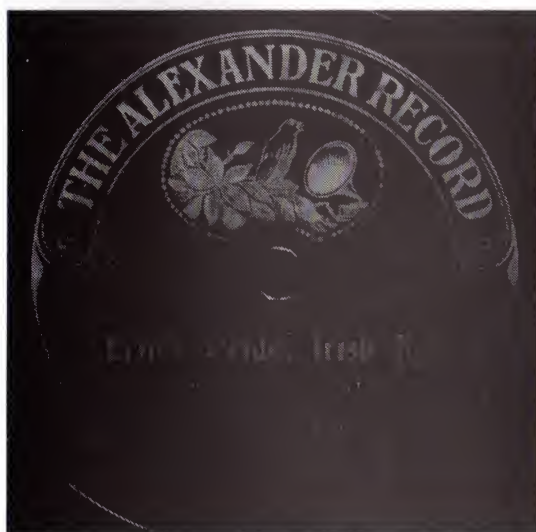
### Ajax Record

I believe there can be little doubt that **Ajax Records** were pressed for the British market - but! They were scheduled to come from the newly incorporated **The Ajax Record Manufacturing Co. Ltd.** on May 11th 1914. Their headquarters were at 54 Red Cross Street, London E.C.

Ajax had been submitted for a trademark registration at the end of March 1914 by a manufacturer's agent, John Abrahams, also at 54 Red Cross Street. Registration took place in July 1914 at which time John Abrahams was a director of the Ajax company.



Aircraft Products Ltd. record



The Alexander Record



An announcement stated that 350 records were to be ready for sale in July 1914 with other releases to come on a monthly basis. The records were to be 10" in diameter and double-sided. John Abrahams had already been an agent for the second style of Invicta Records since November 1913. Their discs were pressed by Berolina Schallplatten G.m.b.H., the company who supplied William Barraud's Invicta record Co. Ltd.

It is possible that the Ajax Record was to have been pressed by the Berolina company from its matrix stock, as 350 titles for an initial issue from a new company's recording sessions would have entailed much overtime working!

As it is, no example of the Ajax record has come to hand, and as the Great War broke out on 4th August 1914, there was no chance that any more would arrive from Germany even if the first deliveries had taken place.

None of the company's one thousand shares were ever allocated and the company, apparently, did no business although it was not dissolved until 1920.

There had been four directors, one of whom had been situated in Paris and another in Leipzig, thus it is possible that the Ajax record was to have been both an export and German home market label. Has anyone an example of an Ajax Record (not the USA variety)? Did Mr Abrahams have "his own record"?

## Alexander Record

10" diameter examples of **Alexander Record** are known - there is a possibility that 12" diameter discs were also pressed.

The proprietor of the discs remains undiscovered, but a strong contender for that accolade could have been the **Alexander Record Company** of Birmingham, Chester,

Coventry and Manchester. That business was a three-way partnership between Louis Alexander, Philip A. Cowen and Philip Rubinstein.

I cannot say when the business was established but I know that Rubinstein departed in June 1911 to pursue business on his own account in Chester, probably at the Chester branch premises. Alexander and Cowen parted in November 1911 with Cowen carrying on as the Alexander Record Company in Birmingham and Coventry and at a new location in Nottingham. Presumably Louis Alexander had been the Manchester representative of the firm.

The few Alexander Records seen had all been pressed from Beka Grand Record masters in Germany and carried the same catalogue numbers as the Beka discs. They were never advertised in any of the trade journals and, with the company established in a number of highly populated centres, this leads me to suspect that here we have another "tallyman" business in which clients were persuaded to commit themselves to purchasing a given number of records over a stipulated period and who, at the conclusion of their contract, would be in full possession of a table gramophone loaned to them at the commencement of the contract.

The Beka Record company of Germany were known suppliers for that type of business, but it is also known that it withdrew from such activities around mid 1911.

The highest numbered Alexander Record traced has a catalogue number 478, which as a Beka record was issued towards the close of 1911.

## Allegro

From an example seen **Allegro** records were recorded by the Decca Record Co. Ltd., perhaps exclusively, for an unknown



Allegro Record



Air Ministry Record



proprietor (probably a French concern). Neither the label nor the name appears in the Trade Mark Register.

On disc 54 it is noticeable that no artist is credited with the performance on the disc. The recording date of the side appearing on the slide transparency shown would have been a little before 4th January 1932.

Any further information about the Allegro discs would be gratefully received.

### **A M (with an imperial crown between the "A" and the "M")**

The **A (crown) M** discs were made for Britain's Air Ministry, hence the initials, and all appear to have been made in the 12" size only.

They were recorded as instructional courses for service personnel in the Royal Air Force and probably for other servicemen associated with flying aircraft and obviously much employed during the 1939-1945 war. It still has to be established exactly when they were first introduced.

There were both double-sided and single-sided discs and on the labels, in large letters, was the admonition *For Official Use Only*, therefore no general sales to the public. At least four catalogue series were in use having sub-number series according to the subjects under instruction.

Some discs, bearing A.I.M.I. prefixed matrix numbers, were made by the Decca Record Co. Ltd. There were other discs with S.A.M. prefixed matrix numbers, but who made them is not yet known.

### **For Ambassador Records see under Argo**

### **Animal Language Records**

Ludwig Koch, the wild-life recording expert (in association with The Parlophone Co. Ltd. of Hayes, Middlesex) produced for *Country*

*Life* magazine a series of **Animal Language Records**, accompanied by a booklet written by the biologist Professor Julian Huxley, the whole costing one guinea per set.

The booklet and discs received a mention *The Gramophone* publication for December 1938.

This is all the information I have about these discs at present.

### **The Antone Records**

On the label of **The Antone Record** disc which I possess it is stated "Distributed solely by F. & E. Stoneham, Booksellers to the Motorist", which just about qualifies those booksellers as having their own records. The discs were recorded and produced by **The Antone Company of Epsom, Surrey**, and if that was the only business engaged in by that company then the disc would not qualify as a contracted record under the terms of reference *We also have our own records*.

The recordings would appear to be post second world war, my example stemming from 1948.

The distributors were in New Bridge Street, London E.C.4 and it may be that my particular disc and others of a similar repertoire, viz. motor sport, were all that they were concerned with as distributors, with the Antone Company engaged in recording other material for other businesses.

My example is a 10" diameter double-sided shellac disc.

### **Appeals Department of The British Legion**

Strictly speaking, the above is not the name style of the disc - it has no name. It could quite as well be filed under Anonymous or by its title *A Personal Message to You from the Prince of Wales - Patron of the British*

### *Legion.*

The record is 7½" in diameter and single-sided and was almost certainly manufactured under the Dubrico Ltd. patent process (the same as used by Durium Unbreakable Records and Hit-of-the-Week discs), but unlike the similar Aircraft Products Ltd. discs no patent number nor Sound Distributors' name appears.

The only markings on the disc, which was produced for the Armistice Day "Poppy" fund raising appeal on November 11th 1935, was the number B99.

{The disc was played at the meeting}

## **The Arden Doorway to Health and Beauty**

The above was the label style for a set of 10" discs called *Elizabeth Arden Exercises* for Elizabeth Arden Ltd., the beauty products manufacturers, with its showrooms at 25 Old Bond Street, London W.1. As yet I have not been able to find out who recorded and who manufactured these records.

A matrix number, 10255 can be seen on side 5, with its *Twist, Pull and Squeeze* exercises, which is in a number range of matrixes used by J. E. Hough Ltd. at its Edison Bell works. That number has yet to be found on a Winner, Velvet Face or a Beltona disc (all of which have matrix numbers in close proximity, so close, in fact, that it would not be logical for the exercise disc to bear one matrix number in isolation from the rest in a set of records).

Should the matrix number prove to be one from J. E. Hough Ltd. then it was recorded around the autumn of 1926.

## **Argo (formerly Ambassador)**

**Ambassador** was the name first used by Harley Usill for his 78rpm discs which he began recording more as a hobby than a commercial enterprise in 1950. Whether any

of the discs were sold before Usill was enjoined by an order of court not to use the name which was already a trademark registered within the class which covered the talking machine industry is not clear. **Argo** was the name Usill chose as a substitute.

Argo discs, before becoming a micro-groove product, had been pressed in both the 10" size and the 12" size. A "U" prefixed catalogue number is known and new issues mentioned in *The Gramophone* for December 1951 reveal that a 10" series had "R" prefixed numbers and a 12" series had "S" prefixed catalogue numbers.

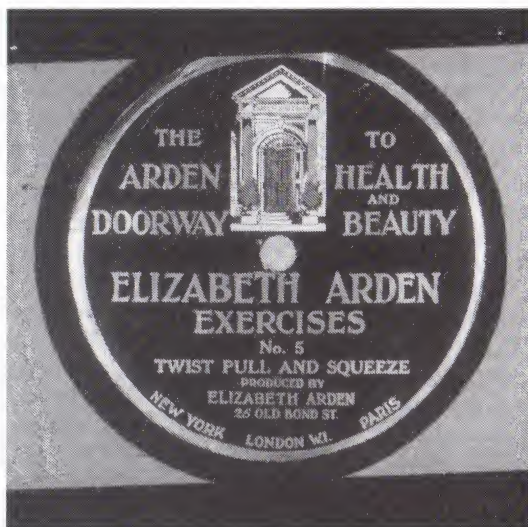
The early Argo discs were recorded on Emidiscs (a product of EMI Sales & Services Ltd.). The later Argo discs, of which only 13 are known by me, were a product of the Decca Record Co. Ltd., which company eventually took over the Argo business as its own. By this time Argo were selling vinyl long-playing records. For a time the Argo was taken out of production but it has re-emerged once again as a compact disc.

## **Arrow Record**

**Arrow Records** of 10" diameter and double-sided had a catalogue numbering series which ran from A1 to beyond A223. They were pressed from Carl Lindström A.G. matrices in Berlin or from Carl Lindström (London) Ltd. matrices at its Hertford Town factory, The Mead Works, in Gas House lane.

Arrow Records were first put on sale at the opening of the new 1913/14 season, in September/October. They were still featuring in advertisements in June 1915, from The Scala Record Co. Ltd.

The Arrow records belonged to Otto Ruhl, the German merchants agent who had been responsible for the introduction of the variously sized Beka Records in December 1905. Beka later became part of the Lindström A.G. complex of companies.



The Arden Doorway to Health and Beauty



Autograph Record



Ruhl applied for the registration of his trade mark (which was the name of the record plus the depiction of an arrow passing through the spindle hole of a disc) in May 1913. Registration took place in the month the records went on offer at 1s.1d. each in October 1913, the start of the new season which began with a price war in disc records.

Otto Ruhl Ltd. shared the same premises at 77 City Road as Carl Lindström (London) Ltd. and Beka Records. It may be his discs were named Arrow because he lived in Harrow or, perhaps because his own initials, in reverse, have the phonetic sound of arrow (R-O)?

All discs discovered have been of the "stencilled" variety (that is to say none were of fresh recordings but had been pressed mostly from already issued Beka and Scala or other Lindström controlled masters).

The registered trade mark was transferred to The Parlophone Co. Ltd. in 1927 with that company registering another Arrow mark in 1928, but I am not aware that Arrow was ever used again on disc records.

{Harry Trevor (baritone) singing Kerry Mills' *Redwing* on Arrow A94 (which was first issued on Beka Grand 40552 in February 1909) was played.}

## Artists Record Co. Ltd.

All I know about the above, at present, is that in December 1930, on behalf of two debenture holders, a receiver and manager was appointed to act for three months and then a receiver acting until June 1932.

Any connection with gramophone has yet to be established.

## Assimil

An **Assimil** learning course, entitled *French Without Toil* comprising an instruction book and a set of gramophone records was copyrighted in France by a Monsieur A. Cheval in 1940.

The copyright passed to the Société à Responsabilité Limitée - Assimil of Paris, France, which subsequently changed its name to Société Cheval with members of the Cheval family remaining the proprietors of the language course all through the war.

After the war came the first intimations that the Assimil course was to become available in Britain.

The company who recorded the discs was Pathé-Marconi of France, associate company of EMI Ltd.

In May 1951 George Cheval entered into an agreement with EMI Institutes Ltd. granting that company sole rights in the Assimil records for Great Britain and its Commonwealth countries except for Canada and India. Pathé-Marconi kept the rights to the rest of the world's potential markets, with offices established in Paris, Brussels, Lausanne, Amsterdam and New York.

Later agreements gave EMI Institutes the right to have records pressed in Britain from "mother" masters sent over from France from which pressing masters were to be processed, to press records in South Africa for the African market and to press records in Australia for the Australian markets.

Under these agreements the EMI Institutes Ltd. marketed the Assimil language courses under the name of *Assimil, England* and took over the British registered trade mark in Assimil from the French company.

107 different discs at 78rpm were produced by EMI Ltd. before the different language courses went over to long-playing vinyl discs in 1955.

## Atlas Records?

Otto Ruhl Ltd. at 77 City Road, London E.C. applied for a picture of Atlas supporting the world on his shoulders for a registered trade mark to cover records and gramophone horns in October 1913. This was granted in January 1914.

In May 1925 Otto Ruhl (1922) Ltd. applied for the same trade mark again but now with the word "Atlas" associated (which it was not hitherto). This was to cover talking machines and records, with a further registration of the word "Atlas" only to cover all talking machine artefacts. The 1913 mark was re-registered in 1927 and a new mark in "Atlas Belgravia" was applied for in January 1933, again for machines, parts and records but I have no evidence that **Atlas** records were ever produced either for sale in the U.K. or for export.

## Autocycle

Autocycle was another name registered as a trade mark for records and talking machines, but again I have no evidence that any were ever made and sold. The mark was applied for by colliery owner Frank Cory Yeo, of Shinfield, Berkshire. Registration took place on July 30th 1928.

## Autograph Record

Exactly who owned the **Autograph Record** is not too clear. There were two parties with an interest in the label, a firm called W. H. Reynolds Ltd. and W. W. (Billy) Whitlock.

Reynolds were talking machine dealers and suppliers to the trade of parts and accessories with premises at Great Eastern St., London E.C. and Hinton Road, Loughborough Junction, London S.W.

At the time the first Autograph Records were advertised in January 1914, Billy Whitlock, the comedian and xylophone and bells soloist, was then holding the position of recording engineer in London for Favorite Records (having been appointed to the post in April 1913).

The Autograph Records were all of Billy Whitlock in his rôle as a comedian and were double-sided 10" diameter records. They were sold through W. H. Reynolds Ltd. All

were stencilled discs and came from various sources so, presumably, Mr Whitlock had proprietary rights of some kind in his own recordings. From four sources there was potentially enough recordings to couple up 36 discs and it has been deduced that at least 33 went on sale.

The labels bore Billy Whitlock's autograph and came from recordings made for Beka Grand Records, Dacapo Records and Favorite Records catalogues (all Carl Lindström A.G. controlled) with a few from Polyphon Records of Polyphonwerke A.G.

Six months after Reynolds first advertised the Autograph Records that company became the sole agency for Favorite Records in the U.K.

I have no idea for how long Reynolds and Billy Whitlock had Autograph records on offer. Autograph was never registered as a trade mark for records but the name was registered in December 1925 for gramophones and parts by Harrod's Ltd. of Brompton Road, London S.W. 1.

**To be continued.**

## Hillandale News

Back issues of the magazine are available from me at **£2.00** for each of the issues for **1989/90, 1990/91, 1991/92, 1992/93 and 1993/94.** (April 1990 and August 1990 issues are not available except in photocopy form.) I can also supply any issue from **No.101** in photocopy form at **£2.00** per issue.

These prices include postage. Please send any orders with cheques/postal orders made out to C.L.P.G.S. to me:

**Chris Hamilton,**

**Fife KY15 4EP, U.K.**



# THE STERLING/CLARION (Cylinder Records) STUDIOS, LONDON by Paul Collenette

In the early years of this century, the centre of London's talking machine industry was City Road, London EC1. So many of the recording companies (The Gramophone Co., Edison Bell, Crystalate) were located along this road (or nearby - Empire Records, Edisonia, the wholesalers, Lugtons) which stretches between the City and Clerkenwell. Most of this area has been redeveloped into office blocks, but a few of the original warehouses and industrial premises remain. The presence of "LHP" (London Hydraulic Power) plates in the pavements indicate that the area was indeed a hive of industry.

As I used to work in offices nearby, I decided to investigate the addresses of old record companies and see what remained of their buildings. It seems that they have all gone, except for this perfectly preserved building pictured here, which was the home of Sterling, Russell Hunting and Clarion records. After Edison Bell these companies were probably Britain's largest makers of gold-moulded cylinders.

The art-nouveau style of architecture suggests that the building at 81 City Road was very new when Sterling Records occupied it from 1905. The company was named after the American phonograph trade pioneer Louis Sterling; though Russell Hunting was a well-known performer as well as a recording engineer, a new company was formed with his name.

I have a few Sterling cylinders: they are of good quality, quite loud, and they still turn up quite frequently today. But did the company really sell a million cylinders in 22 weeks, as they claimed? Sterling used

famous artists like Florrie Forde (enticed from Edison Bell), Will Terry and Albert Whelan. The records themselves were moulded at a factory at Cambridge Heath, a few miles away.

By 1907, the company had so expanded that they moved further south along City Road. But a price war started by Edison Bell (seeking revenge over the Florrie Forde business perhaps?), reducing cylinders to 9d., meant that Sterling were struggling: they went into receivership in 1908.

But the 81 City Road offices remained in the phonograph business. Just after Sterling moved out, Premier Manufacturing Co. (the makers of Clarion cylinder records) moved in. Presumably they wanted premises with a ready-made recording studio. Clarion had considerable success with their 9d. records, and in early 1909 announced a forthcoming 200 grooves per inch "Ebonoid" record. At about that time, the offices were removed to the company's factory at Wandsworth, but "81" continued as the recording studios.

Although Clarion cylinders continued to be made up to 1922. The discs (first phono-cut, later lateral) were discontinued in 1918, whereupon the studios were taken over by Pathé. There the trail goes cold, for I have been unable to find out for how long Pathé remained here - does any reader know?

Finally I would like to Frank Andrews for his help with information for this article.





81 City Road, London EC1

# YOU ARE AN ACCESSORY!

## by Dave Cooper

### 3. The HMV Fibre Needle Cutter No.5a

As in previous articles on accessories the instructions leaflet is self-explanatory. Personally, I have never had much success with fibre needles. No matter how sharp I think the fibre needle is, it never lasts to play a whole side of a record. I have even put fibre needles in a sealed plastic bag with crystals in order to 'dry' them out. It still makes no difference. Advice on this matter would be appreciated.

However, the cutter does work very well. I bought it mainly because it is an HMV item, so I don't depend on it. The original price for this was 5 shillings (1941 listing).

I have drawn the Columbia nickel-plated fibre needle cutter (it was difficult to photograph). In this case the fibre needle has to be removed from the soundbox for re-pointing. Original price for this item was 4 shillings (1932 listing). This is also a clever little device and nice to have in a collection. The fibre needle is put into the triangular

slot and when the 'trigger' is squeezed between thumb and forefinger the device makes a clean cut. The Columbia cutter can be easily dismantled for removal of old cuttings as it is only clipped together. The backplate is drilled so it can be screwed onto the motor board of a gramophone if desired.

Likely current price for the HMV cutter is approximately £25. Likely current price for the Columbia slightly less.

May I add to the above, current prices given in these articles are for the items with boxes and instructions leaflets included (where appropriate). Items on their own attract much lower prices. For example, the Columbia cutter was purchased without box or instructions, but included an HMV fibre needle tin (with fibre needles) and cost only £14. The prices are therefore only a rough guide. More resourceful collectors may be able to find them at lower prices.

Next time: 4. The Needle Dispenser

## Edison Bell

A collection of Edison Bell records that belonged to the late Carlo Adrian, known as the discographer of Edison Bell Winner, is for sale. Its size is almost 1000 records, of which 10% are test pressings. The collection covers all types of Edison Bell records with its strength in Winner and Radio records. The collection will preferably sold as one lot. Enquiries and requests of list to:

Morten Hein, [redacted]

[redacted] Denmark

Phone: [redacted] Fax: [redacted]

E-Mail: [redacted]@inet.uni-c.dk



## INSTRUCTIONS

for the use of

"HIS MASTER'S VOICE"

No. 5A

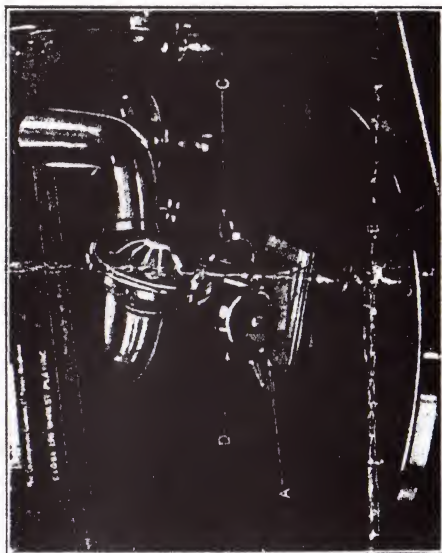
## FIBRE NEEDLE CUTTER

Suitable for Sound Boxes  
Nos. 4, 5 and 5A.



Manufactured by  
**THE GRAMOPHONE CO., LTD.**  
HAYES, MIDDLESEX.

## "His Master's Voice" Fibre Needle Cutter.



"His Master's Voice" Fibre Needle Cutter is a distinct advance on any previous design. A special feature is the razor edge revolving cutter, which gives an extremely clean cut, changing its position automatically so that the whole length of the cutter edge is brought into use.

Fibre needles can be repositioned without their removal from the soundbox, and cuttings are neatly collected in the dome, which can be easily detached and emptied.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE.

Place slot in base of Fibre Needle Cutter over the Turntable Spindle, on top of record, as shown at "A" with lever "C" to the right. Lower soundbox and bring the fibre needle still fixed in soundbox into the cutter guide slot, as shown at "B", moving the whole cutter forward towards needle until the latter rests snugly in the guide slot, with the face edge of needle against edge of waste dome "D". Keep the needle in position by placing the finger lightly on top of the soundbox and press down lever "C" once and release.

The Fibre Needle Cutter should be at right angles to the soundbox when cutting operation takes place.

To empty cuttings, slide the spring clip up from the dome.



## PLUS-A-GRAMS by Tony Voysey

As a modest collector of old gramophones and radios, I find one of the most satisfying methods of reproducing 78rpm records is on a 'plus-a-gram' unit played through a valve radio.

'Plus-a-grams' were produced by most leading manufacturers as a means of playing records electrically using the amplifier of an existing valve radio. The unit consisted of an electrically driven turntable unit with electric pick-up but without an amplifier or loudspeaker. Leads from the pick-up unit simply plugged into the 'gram' input sockets on the radio.

I mentioned in a previous article *An Electric Wind-up* (Hillandale News No.211, August 1996) problems that can occur with a moving-iron pick-up. This type of pick-up is commonly found on 'plus-a-grams' and will often need attention. The motor units may also give problems. In other words the two main parts of the system are both likely to be faulty if an old piece of equipment is acquired.

I have two such units. The first is an HMV in a walnut-finished case. The tone-arm and pick-up are made of bakelite, the pick-up being almost as heavy as a soundbox and using conventional needles. The motor is started in the conventional way of moving the tone-arm to the right. The only control on the unit is a lever to select the auto-brake 'on' or 'off'.

I acquired this several years ago at auction and at the time it was in working order. The pick-up did not, and still does not, require attention but after a short time the motor developed a noise similar to machine gun fire. Inspection of the motor showed that the drive from motor to turntable consisted of a worm-drive from the motor which engaged with a gear on the turntable spindle. These were not engaging properly, producing the resulting noise. The

reason they were not engaging properly was that the alloy casing of the motor had cracked and distorted through age and the resultant distortion was misaligning the worm-drive. I attempted various adjustments to restore the alignment, but to no avail.

The situation was unresolved until one day I came across another machine which was identical except that it had no auto-brake. The vendor was fortunately able to demonstrate that the motor and turntable were in good working order, so I purchased the machine. The cabinet was in a sorry state and the pick-up was an unknown quantity but my idea was to transfer the motor and drive unit to my machine. Having accomplished this an 'old friend' was back in commission, although the second 'cannibalised' machine had cost more than my original!

The second machine I have is a Columbia model in a brown bakelite case. This also has a bakelite tone-arm and pick-up, but much lighter than that on the HMV. Most readers will have seen the Columbia 99 needles in green packets. The pick-up on this model was designed to take these miniature needles which are supposed to play 100 record sides, although I doubt that. The machine operates in the same way as the HMV and also has an auto-brake selector.

It gave quite spectacular results when first tried - smoke billowed from under the turntable! When the turntable was removed, a compartment, similar to a battery compartment, was revealed, which contained two bubbling battery-shaped masses which were eventually identified as wax-paper condensers (capacitors). The motor on this machine is not an induction motor and relies on these two capacitors, of slightly different capacity, to operate. Fortunately the capacity values were still just visible. None of

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The streamline cabinet is walnut-finished, and the lid lined with brown felt to eliminate pick-up noise. Electric motor—no winding. The pick-up movement is contained in a moulded casing, which is lifted to facilitate needle-changing. (With Columbia Chromium Needles, this is largely obviated because each point plays up to 60 sides without changing.)

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the specialist suppliers could provide replacements, the capacity values being very unusual (1.1 and 1.3  $\mu$ F, for the technically minded). Fortunately, I was able to make up two banks of modern polypropylene capacitors to replace them and when these were wired in the motor worked. As luck would have it, the pick-up on this unit was also in working order. The drive from motor to turntable is much simpler on this machine, the rubbered motor spindle driving directly onto the inside edge of the turntable rim. However, I eventually had another problem whereby when the turntable brake was applied, either manually or automatically, the motor kept running i.e. the motor switch was not operating. The switch was found to be a simple polished steel roller in a paxolin guide operating on a pair of contacts. The roller was sticking in the 'on' position and simply polishing it cured the problem.

The connecting cable from those units should normally be a single screened cable and, when connecting, the screen should be connected to

the radio terminal marked 'earth'. Occasionally there will be two unscreened wires from the unit and these should be connected in the mode that gives the least hum on the radio. If poor results are obtained the most common cause will be the pick-up needing attention. Some are more difficult than others to access and work on but, assuming the magnet and coil are satisfactory, the most probable causes of trouble are the armature alignment and condition of rubber dampers. Sometimes player and radio may sometimes be a factory-made items.

I have one further machine, although this was designed to play through headphones. It is a Linguaphone 'Solophone' which was intended for language students to play records without disturbing other members of the household. Unfortunately it is not designed to be played with the lid closed so that the sound coming directly from the pick-up (needle chatter) rather defeats the object.

The unit is in a plain black leatherette case with an electric motor which drives via a rubbered

pulley onto a flange on the underside of the turntable centre. It has a simple on/off switch for the motor and one other novel control - a repeater knob which runs in a slot. When the knob is depressed the pick-up is lifted from the record. By moving the knob along the slot and then releasing it, the pick-up can be moved a few grooves back on the record (up to a quarter of an inch) to repeat the last few phrases. This is an updated version of the repeat attachment I have for a Linguaphone acoustic portable that I am still unable to fathom (letter to *Hillandale News* No.201, December 1994).

The machine has a bakelite tone-arm and pick-up of intermediate weight compared to the other two units and uses conventional needles. A jack plug socket for the headphones can also, I found, be used to connect to a radio. I have, however, had a lot of trouble with the moving-

iron pick-up, which had no output when purchased. Re-centralisation of the armature and rubber replacement restored output from the pick-up but I have been unable to completely eliminate distortion. I have a few 'Solophone' needles, which are very long and thin, and for some reason these give the best reproduction. As I said above - sometimes only partial cures are achieved.

The Columbia model shown in the illustration from 1939 appears identical to my HMV model described above.

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS IN LONDON

The London Meetings are held in the **Parlour Room** at the **Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church Halls**, 235 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8EL at **7pm** on the **third Tuesday of the month**.

**February 18th**

Peter Copeland will continue with Part 2 of his talk on *The Engineer and the Artist*.

**March 18th**

Chris Hamilton - *A Taste of Scotland*.

**April 15th**

Ewan Langford will give a programme about the professional career of his mother the singer Caroline Hatchard from 1910 to 1932, entitled *My Mother, Aunts, Uncles and Friends*.

**May 20th**

To be announced

**June 17th**

To be announced

**July 15th**

Frank is back on the platform with Part 5 of *We Have Our Own Records*.

**August 19th**

Allan Palmer will talk on and play music from *English Song Cycles*.



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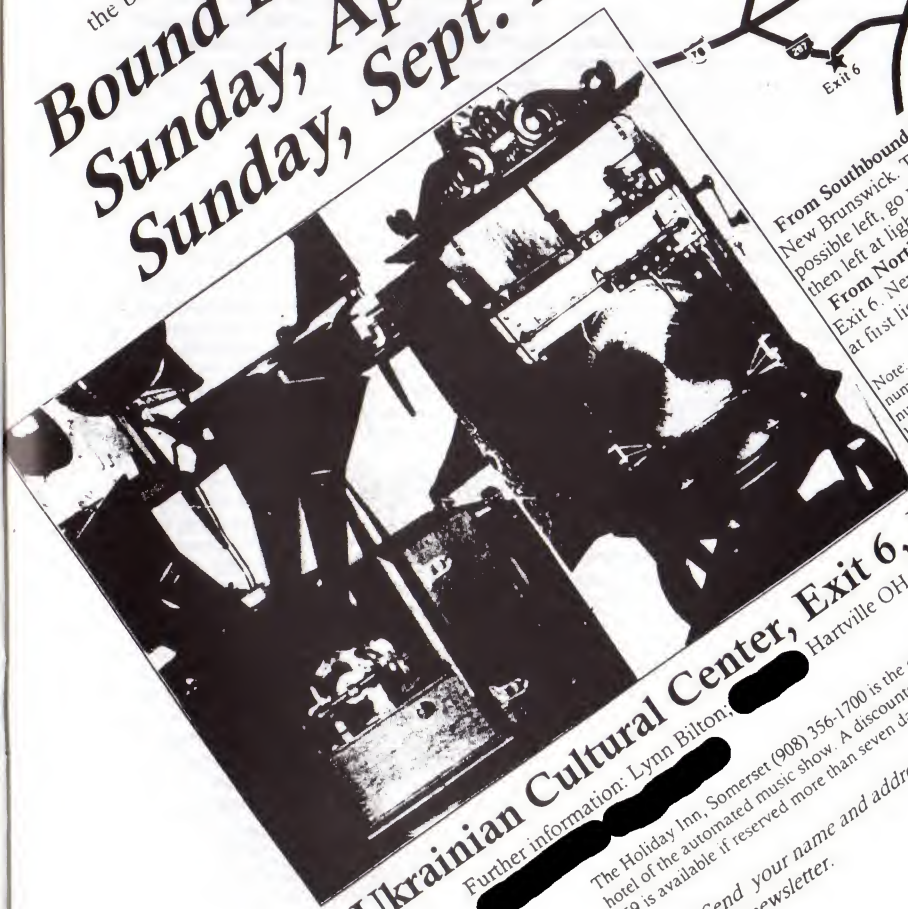
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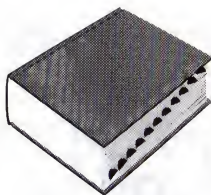
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## REVIEWS



### **The Columbia Phonograph Companion Volume II: The Columbia Disc Graphophone and the Grafonola, by Robert W. Baumbach (with data collected and compiled by Mac Lackey)**

This, Volume II, deals exclusively with the disc machine production of Columbia Graphophones and Grafonolas, manufactured and marketed from 1899 to 1929. Some 75 full page illustrations of machines, with a few Radio Receivers ending this section.

Columbia was more adventurous in its cabinet designs than its rival, Victor. They also produced models, modified from their advertised range, for sale through mail order catalogues like Sears, Roebuck and Co.. This makes the recognition of models difficult through the lack of attached identification plates unlike their rivals, Edison and Victor.

Machines were sold as belonging to either a named or lettered series, with some overlapping. The monochrome illustrations are grouped into either series and date order. Cross referenced in the index. The illustrations, taken from contemporary catalogues are mainly half-toned, with a few line-only pictures. Descriptions and finishes are noted, together with prices and dates of manufacture. They are clear enough to make identification of the style of model in question easy.

I must commend the writer for prefacing the model section with chapters concentrating on Columbia's position in the Talking Machine Industry. Raymond Wile's contribution deals with Columbia as compared with their competitors. Several contemporary Columbia employees give their own recollections and reminiscences, including an 'official' history written by the then treasurer Marion Dorian in 1914.

Whereas the casual reader would happily browse through the illustrations, the researched text deserves careful study. Mac Lackey describes points in identifying machines with a blanket range of named styles, then lists of names and numbers likely to narrow the field. Examples of soundboxes and even known 'specials' are shown. I easily identified the machines in my collection, and would recommend

any Machine collector to find space on his shelves, for what, I feel, will quickly become an indispensable reference work. This book is published by **Stationery X-Press**, California (257 pages, hardback with dust-jacket, **ISBN 0-9606466-2-4**) and is available from the Society's Booklist at **£20 plus postage**.

**George Woolford**

### **The World of the Castrati by Patrick Barbier published by Souvenir Press**

A new book just out should have you hunting through your collections for recordings of the Sistine Chapel Choir from 1902 and 1904. The book is called *The World of the Castrati* by Patrick Barbier. It's subtitled *The History of an Extraordinary Operatic Phenomenon*. And the records you should be looking for? Those made by the very last castrato - and the only one ever to have recorded: Professor Alessandro Moreschi of the Vatican Choir.

As well as Souvenir Press which provided the book, thanks are also due to Pavilion Records who sent me a copy of the CD *Moreschi - The Last Castrato* on their Opal label, which continues to be a top-seller for the record company which used to be based in my home county of Kent, but moved just down the road, over the county boundary to Wadhurst in East Sussex. I used two musical illustrations from the CD in the audio review of the book which I produced for BBC Radio Kent, because without Moreschi we would have no idea how a castrato would have sounded.

It has to be admitted that although Moreschi was very highly rated, he was not an operatic vocalist, he was a church singer and by the time he came to record he was nearing the end of his career. He was also very nervous as can be detected - particularly from his earliest recordings. But as stated above, at least his recordings give an idea of the voice of that castrato.

These days if you mention castrati, the first thought is of the Vatican Choir; but although the Vatican was the first - and in fact the last place to employ castrati - from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth they were among the best known opera singers of their day. Today we think of opera and names like Pavarotti, Kiri Te Kanawa and Placido Domingo come to mind; in the days of the castrati, people like Farinelli, Senesino and Velluti were the operatic superstars. And superstars many were, with all the airs and graces of modern prime donne.



The top rated songers earned fortunes, were fêted by the crowned heads of Europe and lived in the lap of luxury.

The author of *The World of the Castrati*, Patrick Barbier, is a professor at a French university and a specialist in the history of opera. In his research for this book - which took three years to write - he visited cities which were the main centres of musical culture in Europe at the time and delved in two hundred years-worth of musical archives. And to complete the picture he consulted doctors on the whole subject of castration itself! The result is what must be the definitive work on the subject as he explains how musically-promising boys were taken from their families and operated on so that their voices never broke.

Some families - especially the desperately poor - subjected their children to this treatment in the hope that the boys might find fame and fortune and escape the crushing poverty which afflicted those countries of Continental Europe where the practice was widespread. But it was a very much hit and miss affair. There was no guarantee that a sweet-voiced eight or ten year old boy would turn out to be a fine adult singer.

Some - who knows how small a proportion - did find fame and fortune. Others probably made a reasonable living in the provinces, others sadly, were relegated to church choirs or just did not sing at all.

Professor Barbier covers the careers of dozens of the best-known castrati, but as he points out in his preface we know only what others said about them; we lack memoirs (the first-hand writings of the singers themselves), but most importantly, we shall never know exactly how the best of them sounded - the nearest we have is that shadowy impression recorded more than 90 years ago by Professor Moreschi who rates several mentions in the book.

The book is *The World of the Castrati* by Patrick Barbier, translated by Margaret Cropland and published by Souvenir Press £16.99. It may be stocked by any good bookseller and can certainly ordered from any who do not have it in stock.

Unless you are lucky enough to possess any of Moreschi's recordings - and you do not need me to tell you how scarce they are - the only way to hear his voice is to get a copy of *Alessandro Moreschi - The Last Castrato* on Opal CD 9823 (available from the Society's Booklist at £12.95 plus postage).

There are 17 tracks on the disc featuring Moreschi either solo or in ensemble. The record has been available since 1984, firstly on LP and now on CD.

**Colin Johnson**

## **La catalogue de cylindres Pathé de 1896 and**

## **Panorama des Cylindres et Premiers Disques Pathé, chantés et parlés (1898-1910) both by Gilbert Humbert**

Up to now only a few cylinder recordings of Pathé could have been determined. The reasons were manifold: the original catalogues were missing; the numbering of Pathé cylinder recordings was filled with gaps all over; several numbers were used simultaneously for different recordings in varying years. Additionally some of the former commercial representatives had made their own catalogues to sell their obsolete cylinders whilst still having the actual ones in stock. Now Mr Gilbert Humbert, an French expert on Pathé, has started to make the impossible possible. With his two books *La catalogue de cylindres Pathé de 1896* and *Panorama des Cylindres et Premiers Disques Pathé, chantés et parlés (1898-1910)* about 10,000 cylinders and first discs, including voice recordings (singing and speech) are listed. A third volume listing instrumental recordings is in preparation.

*La catalogue de cylindres Pathé de 1896* refer to Pathé's first cylinder recordings in 1896. The book starts with a foreword in French (3 pages) followed by the catalogue, which includes all 1896 recordings and their data (12 pages). *Panorama des Cylindres et Premiers Disques Pathé, chantés et parlés (1898-1910)* refers to Pathé's cylinder recordings and first disc recordings, which were made in the years 1898-1910. This volume also has a foreword in French, more detailed than in the previous volume (19 pages), which includes valuable historical information and several indices, making it easier to discover the recording data of each performer. A German version of the foreword by myself is included as well (the next 18 pages).

After this the panorama begins (96 pages): each page is divided into several columns to display all the recording data. From this you can find out the year when the recordings were made or when the cylinders/discs were moulded/pressed, the composers, the performers and their pseudonyms (when known). *Panorama des Cylindres et Premiers Disques Pathé, chantés et parlés (1898-1910)* has become a component of the National Library of France.

I was really fascinated by both these books and I would recommend them to every collector of Pathé items. But if you don't read or speak French (like myself) you'll have to use a dictionary to translate the forewords. Nevertheless you can use the data and tables without recourse to a dictionary! Each book is spiral-bound measuring 8.3" x 11.8". As from 1st October 1996 Mr Humbert has taken over the publishing of all his own books and so these can only be ordered from himself. The address is **M. Gilbert Humbert, [redacted] Fuveau, France.** Please note Mr Humbert speaks only French and German. If you have any problems translating into French I can help. My address is Weidentalerstr. 30, 75045 Walzbachtal, Germany. *La catalogue de cylindres Pathé de 1896* costs **50FF. + 41FF. for p&p.** and *Panorama des Cylindres et Premiers Disques Pathé, chantés et parlés (1898-1910)* costs **245FF + 41FF. for p&p.** Because of high bank charges it may be more convenient for buyers from outside Europe to send the money in cash and add another 15FF. for p&p.

**Sven Traunfelder**

## The Magnificent Music Machine by Joe E. Ginn

Little has been documented about the companies formed by E. M. Ginn and his work developing the EMG and E. M. Ginn gramophones. The above booklet by Joe E. Ginn, the son of E. M. Ginn, is a collection of personal reminiscences of his famous father.

For the first time the enthusiast can learn some new slants to the story of E. M. Ginn. Joe Ginn describes the start of his father's interest whilst he was working on a farm with his brother-in-law Dave Phillips. He then goes on to give some account of his father's activities from his first shop in High Holborn, through Grape Street, Rathbone Place, Soho Square and finally to Frith Street.

Whilst there are some grammatical errors and several spelling mistakes in this booklet (the author admits that he is no scholar but more of a practical man) this, to my mind, does not detract from the importance of this booklet in making some more information available on the activities of one of the designers of the "Rolls-Royce" of acoustic gramophones. Joe E. Ginn deserves the support of us all and I urge our readers to give him this by purchasing his booklet. It is excellent value at **£6 including postage** (the size is A4). It is available direct from Joe E. Ginn at [redacted] Crimlesham, Norfolk PE33 9DZ.

**Chris Hamilton**

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## REVIEW



**Mahler: Symphony No. 9 in D major; Vienna Philharmonic, Bruno Walter (conductor). Dutton Essential Archive CD-DEA5005, 70:13, ADD mono, bargain price.**

Gustav Mahler completed Symphony No. 9 in 1910. The work, however, was not performed during his lifetime; he died in 1911. The first performance took place in 1912, with Bruno Walter conducting the Vienna Philharmonic. Mahler had a high opinion of Walter, both professionally and personally. The former's faith in the latter's musical abilities was expressed early in their relationship. When Walter was experiencing difficulties with his colleagues in Breslau in 1896, Mahler wrote to his young friend's superior, Theodore Löwe. In his letter, Mahler defends Walter vociferously: 'I have been hearing strange things from Breslau... When a young lion sets foot among those old donkeys...of course they would dearly love to give him the proverbial kick...his colleagues [are] not worth so much as one of Walter's nail-parings. This is something I herewith emphasize *fortissim!*'

During his career, Walter championed Mahler's works. It is not surprising, therefore, that the HMV producer, Fred Gaisberg, should engage him to conduct the first recording of this symphony. In an article in *The Gramophone* (September 1944), Gaisberg recalls the difficulties involved in recording the work. As the symphony was both expensive to mount and hard to record, it was decided that the best solution was to document a live performance. The concert was given at the Musikvereinsaal, Vienna, on 16 January 1938. Walter prepared the Vienna Philharmonic meticulously. Five rehearsals were arranged, at which the engineers could rectify any technical problems that might arise. In an earlier article for the same periodical (January 1939), Gaisberg expresses his satisfaction with the recording. He also reflects upon

Walter's personal tragedy: the conductor was forced to leave Vienna when Austria became part of the greater German Reich in 1938. The historic importance of this recording was recognised as early as 1939. W.R. Anderson, writing in *The Gramophone* (January 1939), states that the 'limited issue...will be prized by those who love the composer's music, not only for its own sake, but because of the associations of Walter and Vienna.'

In his monograph, *Gustav Mahler*, Walter argues that the 'first movement is derived from the mood of *Das Lied [von der Erde]*, though in no sense musically related to it. [Rather, it] develops from its own thematic material into the kind of symphonic form which [Mahler] alone could now create.' When Walter writes of 'its own thematic material', he is referring to the movement's opening six bars, where the Andante comodo's four central motifs are heard for the first time. Here, the conductor captures the seminal nature of these bars by creating a sense of rhythmic uncertainty. This, however, gives way to lyricism from bar 7, where the second violins' D major theme is shaped in an exemplary manner. Between bars 7 to 16 inclusive, Walter, whilst maintaining an overall tempo of  $q=63$ , applies rubato to the anacrustic beats. When Mahler shifts to D minor at bar 29, the conductor avoids the temptation of a 'più mosso'; instead, he retains the 'tempo primo'. By continuing with the original speed in the bars preceding the ritardando (bar 46), Walter heightens the sense of release that is achieved when the music returns to the opening pulse in bar 47. One of the most praiseworthy aspects of the conductor's reading of the first movement is his ability to colour the core tempo with suitable rubato. His subtle rhythmic inflections, along with his observance of Mahler's carefully crafted dynamics, creates an illusion of rhythmic freedom; this is the mark of a great conductor. At bar 80, Walter realizes the *Etwas frischer* by an increase in speed ( $q=88$ ). He continues to move the tempo forward between bar 86 (*Fliessend*) and bar 90 inclusive. By his observance of the ritardando in bar 91, the conductor underlines the arrival of the second subject at bar 92. This, however, is a mere staging-post, for his true destination is bar 106. In the bars preceding this climax, he uses tempo to generate excitement and to underline the architectonics of the movement. If one were to choose a defining feature of Walter's interpretation, it is the way that he juxtaposes moments of climax with



periods of lyricism. His understanding of the composer's characteristic orchestration is also evident in the first movement. From bar 148, the music requires the conductor to balance the various instrumental voices on different dynamic levels. However, precedence must be given to the first and second violins' weaving melodic material. Walter and the orchestra rise to this challenge, allowing the music to evolve in a transparent fashion.

In *Gustav Mahler*, Walter clarifies his understanding of the second movement. He considers it to be: 'the old, familiar scherzo in a new form' but 'with a tragic undertone sounding through the happiness: "The dance is over." More important, he argues that 'the main tempo is broad.' The movement is divided into three main sections, each with a different speed. The *Weltschmerz* that permeated the Andante comodo is also apparent in this movement. Here, Mahler's treatment of the *Ländler* deliberately avoids the notion of rustic charm; instead, he evokes a sense of futility. Walter's opening tempo,  $q=88$ , complements the qualification found in the scherzo's superscription: *Etwas täppisch und sehr derb* (rather clumsy and very coarse). This speed has direct links with the opening movement. Mention should also be made of the clarinet playing in bars 3 and 4. Here, the balance, attack, phrasing and tonality are all of the highest standard. From the third beat of bar 9, Mahler inserts the direction, *Schwerfällig* (awkward); he supplements this instruction with detailed bowing in the second violins and the violas. Walter emphasises the marked bowing, conjuring up the image of a stumbling country-bumpkin. Tempo II begins at bar 90. Walter realizes the printed 'Poco più mosso' by increasing the speed to  $h.=63$ . This pulse is also directly related to one of those found in the first movement. By juxtaposing the tempi in this fashion, Walter prepares the way for Tempo III. This section is also in the style of a *Ländler*, but taken at a slower speed than that heard at the beginning of the movement. Tempo III has melodic links with the Andante comodo's first subject: the second violins' D major theme. This being the case, Walter reapplies the symphony's opening tempo:  $q=63$ . Today, the ability to manipulate tempi in this fashion is all but lost. However, for a conductor from the central European tradition, it was second nature.

Walter, writing in his monograph, argues that the 'defiant *agitato* of the third movement shows once more Mahler's stupendous contrapuntal mastery.' During the course of the composer's

career, some critics questioned his ability to write counterpoint; the Rondo-Burleske was Mahler's response. As in the scherzo, the qualification within the movement's superscription, *Sehr trotzig* (very defiant), is central to Walter's reading. His opening tempo,  $h=120$ , captures the music's sense of both parody and animosity. Here, the players are confronted with music that challenges their technical abilities. When this recording was made, Symphony No. 9 was not part of the standard repertoire. However, from the playing of the Vienna Philharmonic, there is little evidence to suggest a lack of familiarity. The playing is confident, with a sense of direction that can only be achieved by painstaking preparation. This said, the ensemble is weak between bars 270 and 275 inclusive. In this passage, Walter continues to push the tempo forward. However, the winds sit on its back edge, causing a momentary sensation of uncertainty. This is only a minor problem; it should not be forgotten that this is a recording of a live concert. At the D major interlude (bar 347), Walter applies a 'meno mosso'. Whilst no tempo adjustment is marked in the score - Mahler does, however, insert *Etwas gehalten* (rather held) at bar 354 - the character of the music at this juncture requires a tempo modification. As the key of this interlude is that of the first movement, Walter's choice of a slower speed,  $h=96$ , is appropriate. From the Tempo I subito in bar 522, the conductor's observance of the printed tempo changes underlines the composer's nihilistic tone. Walter's pacing of the progression from Tempo I subito to Più stretto and, finally, Presto gives the players an opportunity to display their virtuosity. More important, it leaves the listener in no doubt as to the conductor's understanding of the architectonics of the music.

The Adagio is the antithesis of the Rondo-Burleske. Walter felt that the last movement 'voices a peaceful farewell.' From the recording, this seems to be the basis for his reading. The introductory nature of the first two bars is underlined by a sense of rhythmic freedom. Whilst Walter evokes the uncertainty of death by the use of rubato, he, nonetheless, retains a core tempo:  $e=63$ . Once again, this tempo is related to that heard from bar 7 in the first movement. Whilst one may view the valedictory tone of the Adagio in isolation, the structure of the symphony as a whole requires the various tempi to be both organised and integrated: Walter's reading reflects not only the structure of the movement in the microcosm but, also, the

finale's function within the symphonic macrocosm. The main body of the movement begins at bar 3; here, Walter takes a new speed:  $e=58$ . By reducing the pulse, he reinforces the *quasi* religious serenity of this passage. As the music is beaten in eight, he is able to exploit more fully the Adagio's implied rubati, complementing Mahler's carefully crafted bowings. The string playing in the finale is also worthy of mention. From the violins' initial up-bow in bar 1, the bowing is designed to meet the needs of the phrase; Walter and the players pace this accordingly. The use of portamenti is strictly controlled and the bow-changes are handled in an highly organized manner.

The CD's sound quality is good and Michael Dutton has remastered the original shellac pressing skilfully. For those interested in either the history of the symphony or performance practice during the first half of the twentieth century, this recording is an essential purchase.

**Raymond Holden**

### **Ernest V. Stoneman - Edison Recordings 1928 on County Records CD 3510**

This compact disc, though published by County records of Floyd, Virginia, U.S.A., is in effect one of the Diamond Cut series, having been processed by the DCart team from lateral-cut test pressings at the Edison site.

It differs from previous issues, however, in drawing from the "Southern" (20000) series of country music. On Edison records, the combo was billed *Ernest V. Stoneman and his Dixie Mountaineers* - who consisted of members of his family on violin and banjo. Ernest Stoneman played guitar and harmonica, and provided the somewhat nasal vocals. But what a lovely accent! As when I first worked in Devon and used the railway's ancient telephone system, I found it hard to understand at first, but it soon grows on you.

He was born in 1893, and after developing a keenness for music, began recording for Okeh in 1925 - and went on to Gennett, Victor and other labels. From this album of 22 tracks, 17 were issued on Diamond Disc, 3 on lateral and 13 on Blue Amberol: 4 were unissued and are thus heard here for the first time. In the 1930s recording work was scarce and he went into obscurity, but resurfaced largely unchanged in style during the 1940s, appearing often on radio up to his death in 1968.

The disc itself is printed with an (at last!) authentic reproduction Edison label, and is accompanied by an informative booklet. The cover has an evocative photo of the Dixie Mountaineers, who look most uncomfortable! (Tired from the long train journey to New York?) But then their mournful expression suits the music.

The booklet does not give composers, nor matrix/catalogue numbers. Some of these are known, and surely the test pressings have the matrix numbers scratched on? Sorry to nag, but to some of us, this is important. There are, however, helpful musical and historical comments.

The sessions here were recorded on 24th/25th April and 21st/22nd November 1928. They crammed a lot into these two-day visits to New York. The April recordings are a bit surfacey (Edison's lateral process only having started in February), but by November, the recording technique had improved significantly.

The music would have been nostalgic even for 1928 (the issuing of many of the recordings on Blue Amberol is quite a give-away!) A lot of the songs are, frankly, rather similar, so I shall pick out just the highlights.

The first track *Remember, the poor tramp has to live*, is previously unreleased. It's pity that there is a pressing fault on my copy of the CD, as it's one of the best numbers on it. The next track, *Prisoner's lament* (possibly a Stoneman composition), has a temperance message and is representative of this collection.

*Sally Goodwin* is a cheerful up-tempo number, like a folk-dance, which marks it out from the others. It was issued on the developmental series (cat. No. 0000) with the experimental (and mis-printed!) label. The design of this was later simplified, losing some of the strapline and lightning bolts, and matrix number. The recording was also published on Diamond Disc and Blue Amberol.

*The Old Maid and the Burglar* has, unusually, a comedy lyric, but is still delivered with the same deadpan vocal. *When the redeemed are gathering in* is one of the gospel selections here. It has a vocal duet, which helps to fill out the sound.

*Goodbye dear old Stepstone* is a bright number - one of my favourites on the album. In *Fallen by the wayside* Ernest V. Stoneman plays the harmonica - and blows some flat notes on this surprisingly brisk number.



*Watchman ring that bell* (unreleased) is tuneful - reminiscent of *Highland Laddie* - and has a pleasant, lively fiddle. There is no vocal (which improves it). *I remember Calvary* has a vocal duet by EVS and Bolen Frost, his brother-in-law. It was released on all three Edison formats.

At first listening I thought this music rather shallow, mournful and monotonous. Hearing it again, though, imagination got to work. The rustic vocals and simple playing of these homely, unspoilt country folk - as if around a camp fire in the Blue Ridge mountains - have a nostalgic and endearing charm. Were these the kind of people who earlier would have gone indoors when the fire burnt out, and got down to the Edison Standard phonograph and Gold Moulded cylinders by the oil lamp?

Whereas this type of music was very popular in the U.S.A. (almost alone keeping the devastated record industry going during the 1930s depression), it is rather specialised for the UK. It's a bit heavy going, but as a snapshot of the past, it is most valuable. And it continues to open up the Edison archives to these rare or unavailable recordings. May this work continue!

This CD is available from the **Booklist at £13 plus postage** for those in the UK or Europe, Far East or Australasia or for those in the U.S.A. direct from **Diamond Cut Productions, [redacted]** Hibernia, NJ 07842-0305 at **US\$13.95** (plus any local sales tax if applicable) plus **US\$2 postage**.

**Paul Collett**

### **Antonia Nezhdanova in Opera and Song, Nimbus Prima Voce NI 7877**

This CD in Nimbus' Prima Voce series features the voice of Antonia Nezhdanova, the famous Russian soprano. It is recorded from pristine original 78s via the huge horn gramophone at Nimbus' Monmouth headquarters.

I know there are some people who do not like the echo-like ambience associated with the Nimbus Prima Voce series. I have to admit that apart from some of the tracks on the company's earlier issues I do not find the rather open sound a distraction.

Nezhdanova's records have never been plentiful and I suspect that for many collectors, the only recordings they have of this distinguished soprano are those re-issued by HMV on the VA

and VB white label Archive series of the 1950s: one song and a couple of operatic items.

This latest offering from Nimbus includes a cross-section of Nezhdanova's wide operatic repertoire said to cover 37 rôles: everything from Elsa in *Lohengrin* to Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*. The acoustic recordings date from a 1906 version of Juliet's *Waltz Song* from Act 1 of Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet* to Antonida's *I do not grieve* from Act 3 of Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar*, recorded in 1914.

Unlike many of her compatriots, Nezhdanova stayed in Russia after the revolution and apparently welcomed the fact that instead of the rich and titled, she could now sing to a much wider and popular audience.

From this later stage of her career comes a selection of electric recordings made in the late 1930s including Pototsky's *Collective Farm Song*! But whether grand opera or propaganda, the voice shines through - and the thirty-three year span covered by these recordings shows just how it remained amazingly undimmed by time.

Generally the transfers are very good; however there is a loud 'thump' just over two and a half minutes into track fourteen: Tosti's *Serenata*. It sounds to me like a modern, extraneous noise - perhaps a slamming door - picked up by the Nimbus microphones, rather than a pressing fault or a noise in the original acoustic recording studio.

This CD of *Antonia Nezhdanova in Opera and Song* is on **Nimbus NI 7877** and is available from most good classical record shops at mid-price.

**Colin Johnson**



# LETTERS



## Creator's Discography Update

Dear Chris,

The discography of Creator's Band intrigued me. I am surprised when somebody manages to give extensive lists of the activities of minor companies and Frederick Williams' seems to have a remarkably good job. It is a pity he has come unstuck with the Victors, though, and if he had asked me I might have been able to put him on the right track. Brian Rust's *Victor Master Book* will give all the Victors - even if it is impossible to tell which takes were issued!

The "Disco Gramofono" of course are all Victors and to my surprise I see that they were not listed under that heading at all. I expected to see the items duplicated there.

I have edited the Registers of the R, S, HN and AV series (the books being at Hayes) and I can supply the following details, though I don't have the take numbers which were not listed at all. Mr Williams will have to do a bit more work if he wants all the take numbers, but that kind of information is fairly easy to obtain nowadays. Also, I have included an omitted S coupling number but have not checked through the whole R series as it is such a big one. There might possibly be another missed item or two in that. The Rs of course were later transferred to the cheaper HN series.

AV 759 delete first line (Banda Gramofono)

AV 759	BVE 37889-	
HN 538	BVE 37890-	from R 9261
HN 538	BVE 37889-	from R 9261
HN 539	BVE 37890-	from R 9291
HN 539	delete second entry	
HN 540	BVE 37890-	from R10242
HN 540	delete second entry	
HN 541	BVE 37889-	from R10925
HN 541	delete second entry	
HN 542	BS 70160-	from R 11042
HN 542	BS 70161-	from R 11042
S 4928	CVE 33136-	
S 4928	CVE 33131-	

S 8408	CVE 35820-
S 8408	CVE 35821-
S 8412	CVE 35819-
S 8412	CVE 35819-
S 8414	CVE 39544-
S 8414	CVE 35822-
S 8416	CVE 38803-
S 8416	CVE 38804-
S 8420	CVE 35827-
S 8420	CVE 35830-
S 8436	CVE 35824-2
S 8436	CVE 35832-3
S 8442	CVE 38835-
S 8442	CVE 38837-
S 8444	CVE 39545-
S 8444	CVE 38836-
S 8446	CVE 35829-
S 8446	CVE 35831-
S 8448	CVE 39547-
S 8448	CVE 39550-
S 8552 and S 8554 — I don't believe they exist.	
I think they are a misprint for	
S 8442 and S 8444. Not in	
Register.	
S 10110	CVE 35828-T1 Transferred in
	Italy. Original take not noted.
S 10110	CVE 39543-
S 10115	CVE 46341-T1
S 10115	CVE 46342-T1
S 10125 and S 10127 — These numbers are	
not by Creator's Band.	
S 10256	CVE 58044-
S 10256	CVE 58052-
S 10257	CVE 58051-3
S 10257	CVE 58054-
S 10282	CVE 58047-
S 10282	CVE 58062-
S 10345	CS 61033- [sinfonici]
	[Mancinelli-Creator]
S 10345	CS 61036- [ditto] [ditto]
S 10459	CS 61060-
S 10459	CS 61061-

Regards,  
Alan Kelly, Sheffield

## A Cautionary Tale

Dear Chris,  
Many years ago a canny engineer told me that if an unexpected fault occurs on the car, always think back to the last job that was carried out on it, even though there may be no apparent connection, and suspect this first. I have used this philosophy several times with some success. A simple example would be if the car

failed to start and a new set of contact breaker points had been fitted the previous day. Unfortunately it is not always that easy.

If I may stay with the car a bit longer, a family member recently told me that the interior light on her Mini was not working. A blown bulb would have been a friendly reason but the fault was traced back to a recent windscreen wiper motor replacement! When the car was purchased the hazard warning lights were not working. I obtained a replacement flasher unit but the wiring was different to the original and the wire connecting the unit to "earth" was no longer required. I left the wire disconnected and the unit operated satisfactorily. The other end of the wire was earthed via the wiper motor casing. When replacing the motor terminal the repairer had obviously seen the loose wire and reconnected it to the spare terminal on the flasher unit. This blew the fuse in the hazard light circuit which is shared by the interior light circuit.

For those of you still with me, the same philosophy can be applied to gramophones. I have only one horn gramophone. It is an anonymous model and probably a "bitzer" - although not a Crapophone! - but I am very attached to it as it was fiftieth birthday present from my wife. It had a history of mainspring problems whereby the stud attaching to the centre of the spring to the arbor kept falling out and the spring was also a bit weak. I eventually had a replacement spring and new stud fitted about three years ago.

Although not used very often, all was well until last week (last week of September 1996) when the spring ran down before completing a single side of a 10" record. As a first step I decided to lubricate the motor bearings, cogs and governor. On trial the machine played the same record through, with some power to spare. End of story? No, just the beginning. On the next winding the mainspring spontaneously unwound, out of control, taking the winding handle with it. I had only experienced this once previously, on a portable machine, and discovered the retaining spring on the winding shaft was oily. This spring is designed to allow the shaft to turn when winding but to grip the shaft in the reverse direction to prevent the mainspring from unwinding. My horn model has the same system.

The last operation I carried out on the machine was lubrication - about ten minutes previously! I, must therefore, have dripped oil onto the spring unwittingly, thus causing the problem myself. I de-oiled the shaft spring and rewound the motor. Again, the mainspring spontaneously unwound but not the handle. Had the mainspring retaining stud popped out during the first uncontrolled spring release? Things were going from bad to worse. I removed the spring barrel from the motor. In order to remove the cover the arbor had first to be removed - easy when the spring is completely detached but on this occasion it remained stuck half way. After further manipulation the arbor was finally removed so that the cover could be knocked out with a drift through the arbor hole. Yes, the stud had come out but the spring had also broken on the **inner** turn.

So there you have it. Routine lubrication broke the mainspring! Not an obvious chain of events, but it happened. Small consolation that I know how it happened!

Yours sincerely,  
Tony Voysey, Dursley, Gloucestershire

## Marx Toy Gramophone

Dear Chris,  
I saw from *Hillandale News* No.211, August 1996 that the interest in the Marx Toy Gramophone seems to have died down. However, if there are any readers who would like one, a friend of mine who runs a shop which specialises in second-hand toys managed to produce three of the machines when I enquired about them. I have bought one, which leaves two for sale, both with some records. I have these at home, and if anyone would like to contact me (tel: 01304-617875) I should be quite happy to act as the "middle man". One is "mint in box", the other is also boxed, but has had some use. It works satisfactorily, but one of the two lugs on the base of the arm has broken off.

Yours sincerely,  
Harry Howe, [REDACTED] Worth, Deal, Kent  
CT14 0DA.

## NORTHERN GROUP

**Next meeting March 16th 1997  
is at Alston Hall, Preston and will  
start at 1.30pm sharp**

Bill Mayers talk on *British Singers*  
Bill will be using modern equipment

The rest of the programmes for the current  
year will be given in the next issue.

## REGIONAL GROUP SECRETARIES

**Clockwork Music Group**  
H. P. Bailey,  
[REDACTED]

Tyne and Wear NE16 4ES

**Midlands Group**  
Phil Bennett,  
[REDACTED]

Whitmore Reans,  
Wolverhampton WV6 0JW  
Tel: [REDACTED]

**Northern Group**  
Ann Mallinson,  
[REDACTED]

Barrow,  
Cumbria LA13 0HO  
Tel: [REDACTED]

## MIDLANDS GROUP DIARY for 1997

All Meetings are held in Carrs Lane Methodist Centre, Birmingham unless stated otherwise.

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Saturday 15th March</b>     | Roger Preston presents <i>A Classical Man Looks at Jazz</i><br>Wal Fowler presents <i>Come Fly With Me</i>  |
| <b>Saturday 17th May</b>       | Phil Bennett and Ed Parker present <i>All Strung Up</i> with jazz on<br>stringed instruments  |
| <b>Sunday 8th June</b>         | Joint Meeting with Northern Group at Alston Hall, Preston. Miles<br>Mallinson will give a programme on <i>Gilbert &amp; Sullivan on record</i> and<br>and Phil Bennett will be giving a <i>Jazz</i> programme |
| <b>Saturday 19th July</b>      | Mick James - Programme to be announced<br>John Stroud presents <i>Comedy Capers</i>   |
| <b>Saturday 20th September</b> | Peter Dempsey and Eddie Dunn present <i>From the High Seas to the<br/>Rolling Deep</i> and by way of relief <i>Make 'Em Laugh</i>   |
| <b>Saturday 8th November</b>   | <i>Ladies Night</i> with Beryl Baker and Gina Parker  |

**Saturday 17th January 1998**

Midland Group AGM - bring your own record along for the entertainment



## REPORTS



### London Meeting, November 19th 1996

Peter Copeland from the National Sound Archive gave the first part of his paper *The Engineer and the Artist*. From the amount of audience participation it was quite obvious that Peter had struck up a rapport with those present. Peter dealt with the various aspects of producing a quality gramophone record from the engineer's point of view. For the part of his talk, Peter concentrated on the early days, dealing with the acoustics, reverberation and continuity. Illustrations used ranged from Columbia 9048 with the Associated Glee Clubs of America singing *Adeste Fideles* through HMV E333 on which Sir Charles Wakefield (the founder of Castrol Ltd. and Lord Mayor of London) recorded a speech in 1916 to recruit people to the armed forces to recordings made at the Royal Albert Hall and at Abbey Road.

The subject of duration was also mentioned, with reference to the 3-minute side and the 4-minute side and the influence those constraints had on performance.

We eagerly look forward to Part 2.

### Soundbox

### London Meeting, December 17th 1996

The annual members night of 1996 had as its theme *Flying, Music in the Air or On the Wing*. Members and guests brought their choices of recordings on the above.

The evening got off to 'a flying start' with part of *The Story of Flying* from an LP. We visited the world of ornithology with Joe Petersen with *The Skylark*, Conchita Supervia with *La Paloma* (The Dove), A Budgerigar with a Moth with Arthur Askey and A Gentle Lark with Evelyn Scotney. Comedy came via Tony Hancock *In Flight*, Kruschev *Landing Rehearsal*, A Flying Trapeze with Bob Newhart and *Pigs Might Fly* with Tommy Trinder. Frank Sinatra invited us to *Come Fly with Me* and Peter Dawson gave us *The Arrow and The Song*. After the full definition of the word *Flying* Billy Williams was allowed to *Paper the Parlour* and Alice Mann closed the evening with *Swing is in the Air*.

An enjoyable evening and refreshments were much appreciated thanks to Win Andrews and Joyce Edwards.

### Soundbox

### Midlands Meeting, Saturday 21st September 1996

Mainly because of the Croydon Record Fair taking place the next day, some of the regulars were absent and missed an extremely interesting programme put on by Eddie Dunn and Peter Dempsey entitled *Pot-Pourri*.

The bill of fare ranged from BBC Radio excerpts such as: Terry Thomas' *An Invitation to join the Army* from a Victory Star Show, through Max Wall narrating *A Tribute to Little Tich* by members of his family to Gladys Morgan's *Welsh Rarebit*.

We then heard some commercial records including *Call Me to Arms* (from Verdi's *Il Trovatore*) with Giacomo Lauri-Volpi, *Everything is Hotsy-Totsy Now* with the Coon-Sanders Night Hawks and *Moorish Idol* (from Billy Mayerl's *Aquarium Suite*) with Billy Mayerl.

Truly a comprehensive range to suit all tastes. Hopefully this type of programme will be repeated in the future.

**Geoff Howl**

## Midlands Meeting, Saturday 16th November 1996

Richard Taylor brought along a fine selection goods for sale, including a good-looking Edison 2-minute Standard Phonograph and a comprehensive range of cylinders (including some indestructible ones). Other folk brought along LPs, 78s and books.

It is pleasing to report another 'first' for our group in that the programmes for the evening were presented by two ladies.

Beryl Baker gave us a programme of *All Sorts*. This was a selection of songs that were among her favourites across the years. She used 78s, CDs and tapes and amongst the artists heard were Jimmy Boyd with *I saw Mummy Kissing Santa Claus*, Frank Sinatra singing *Just One of Those Things* and Ella Fitzgerald with *Manhattan*.

Probably the most popular item in her programme (at least to a Midlands audience) was *A Black-Country Night* with local comedienne Dolly Allen. She was greatly loved by those who saw and heard her.

After the tea-break Gina Parker presented a programme called *Five Decades of Gina*. Each item played represented a reminder of some milestone in her life. Gina used 78s and LPs, and these included: Gene Autry in *You are my Sunshine*, Elvis Presley in *Heartbreak Hotel*, Duke Ellington in *Take the 'A' Train* and Fred Astaire in *Puttin' on the Ritz*. The Gene Autry item was a favourite of Gina's since she was 5 years old.

Both ladies are to be congratulated on their efforts and such was their popularity that they have been asked to come back in the 1997/1998 season.

## C.L.P.G.S. BOOKLIST

*DCart - Diamond Cut Audio Restoration Tools*. (Computer program for enhancing reproduction of 78s, described by Douglas Lorimer in last issue.) **£45 plus postage.**

*The Columbia Phonograph Companion, Volume II: The Columbia Disc Graphophone and the Grafonola* by Robert W. Baumbach (with data collected by Mac Lackey) is available at **£20 plus postage.**

*The Compleat Talking Machine* (2nd Edition) by Eric L. Reiss is now available at **£25 plus postage.**

### Postage

**U.K.** Items with a total value of **£5** or less **add 50p**. Items over **£5** value up to and including **£10** **add £1.00**. Items with a total value over **£10** **add 10%**

**Overseas add 15%** of total price unless total order is less than **£1**, then apply minimum charge of **£1**.

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please note that George Woolford has moved and that the new address of the Society's Booklist is now:

**c/o George Woolford,**

**Wells-next-the-Sea,  
Norfolk NR23 1RD**

**Tel:**

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